GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
PANCHAYATI RAJ
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2260
ANSWERED ON:14.03.2007
EMPOWERING WOMEN IN PANCHAYATI RAJ
Mandal Shri Sanat Kumar

Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has taken any initiatives to strengthen the country's women Panchayat Heads;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by the Government in this regard; and

(c) the steps being taken by the Government to empower Panchayat Heads especially women?

Answer

MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR)

(a) to (c): The Ministry of Panchayati Raj is implementing a scheme of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Yojana. One of the components of this scheme is 'Training and Capacity Building' under which funds are provided to State Governments for training of elected representatives including women representatives and officials of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The training is imparted to the elected representatives by the State Governments through the State Institutes of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development and Extension Training Centres. Funds for the aforesaid scheme are provided by Central Government and State Governments to train the representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions in the ratio of 75:25.

A study by Prof. Niraja Gopal Jayal of the JNU is proposed on "Survey of Elected Women Representatives to the Panchayats".

Further, the Panchayat Mahila Shakti Abhiyan − a movement to strengthen the elected women of the PRIs - has been initiated by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj under the aegis of the "Chalo Gaon Ki Ore" rubric of the National Commission for Women. A core group comprising selected EWRs, activists, academics etc is nominated by the State Government/ Government of India to draft and facilitate a draft women's charter for the EWRs of the state stating thereon their particular issues. Subsequently, all women Zila Pramukhs, all women Pradhans and selected women Sarpanchs from each district of the state, as well as Core Group members and some eminent personalities are invited to a said two day conference of panchayat women. A women's charter comprising all the major points distilled from the discussions with the women representatives of the PRIs is then finalized.

The Panchayat Mahila Shakti Abhiyan has been conceptualized to initiate awareness about the gender issues in governance and to facilitate Elected Women Representatives in performing their mandate to the best of their abilities. Most EWRs see themselves as isolated and unorganized, functioning without the support of a structure and have spoken of the need to form into groups or associations so as to be part of a forum that addresses their special needs in a largely male-dominated social and political milieu. So far, conferences of elected women representatives, activists, NGOs, eminent personalities have been held as under:-

1. Udaipur (Rajasthan) - 23rd & 24th April, 2006.
2. Patiala (Punjab) - 17th & 18th July, 2006.
3. Bangalore (Karnataka) 5th September, 2006
4. Dehradun (Uttaranchal) on 24th September, 2006
5. Imphal (Manipur) - 4th & 5th October, 2006
6. Panaji (Goa) - 19th October, 2006.

Besides the State-level Conferences, a one-day divisional-level conference was also held on 29th November 2006 at Jaipur in Rajasthan. In the State of Sikkim, the conference will be held on 20th and 21st April 2007 at Gangtok and in the State of Assam on 23rd April, 2007. Such conferences are planned for other states as well.